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ABSTRACT

This report addresses how literacy teachers can teach everything that their students need to develop the foundational skills and strategies of literacy, without sacrificing a focus on higher-level thinking about substantive content and good literature. It also addresses the impact on student learning when teachers use a literature-based reading program framework. The authors/educators and members of the Teachers Learning Collaborative present the results of a 3-year collaborative effort to create an innovative literacy curriculum framework that would support teachers' dual--and often competing--commitments in literacy instruction: (1) to make sure that all students have the opportunity to learn literacy skills and strategies with texts that are at their instructional level; and (2) to make sure that all students have access to, and instruction with, texts that are appropriate to their age level, even if the students are unable to read such materials without support. The report describes the result of their efforts, the Book Club Plus instructional framework. It first details the framework's conceptual foundations and the problem that it was designed to address, before describing the implementation of Book Club Plus in a third grade classroom. It concludes by presenting three cases, reflecting the diversity of students taking part in the program and the ways in which those students benefited from their participation in Book Club Plus and related activities. Includes 5 figures and 19 citations of children's books. (Contains 31 references.) (NKA)

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Book Club Plus: A Conceptual Framework to Organize Literacy Instruction

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Book Club *Plus*: A Conceptual Framework to Organize Literacy Instruction

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CIERA Inquiry 3: Policy and Profession
How can literacy teachers teach everything that their students need to develop the foundational skills and strategies of literacy, without sacrificing a focus on higher-level thinking about substantive content and good literature? What is the impact on student learning when teachers use a literature-based reading program framework designed to address this important problem?

In this report, the authors, members of the Teachers Learning Collaborative, present the results of a three-year collaborative effort to create an innovative literacy curriculum framework that would support teachers' dual—and often competing—commitments in literacy instruction: (a) to make sure that all students have the opportunity to learn literacy skills and strategies with texts that are at their instructional level, and (b) to make sure that all students have access to, and instruction with, texts that are appropriate to their age level, even if the students are unable to read such materials without support. This report describes the result of the their efforts, the Book Club *Plus* instructional framework. It first details the framework's conceptual foundations and the problem that it was designed to address., before moving on to describe the implementation of Book Club *Plus* in a third grade classroom. The report concludes by presenting three cases, reflecting the diversity of students taking part in the program and the ways in which those students benefited from their participation in Book Club *Plus* and related activities.

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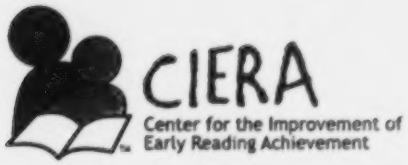

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Book Club *Plus*: A Conceptual Framework to Organize Literacy Instruction

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Book Club *Plus*: A Conceptual Framework to Organize Literacy Instruction

Sit in any teachers' lounge in the United States and it's likely you'll hear teachers talking about the urgent needs of their students and the ever-increasing demands of the curriculum. Teaching today seems far more complex than in the past, and this is particularly noticeable in the area of literacy instruction. According to the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (Donahue, Voekl, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999), we have many students who are not reading at a proficient level, where proficiency indicates solid academic performance. Only 31% of fourth-graders meet the standard for proficiency. Two-thirds meet only the standard for "basic" literacy (a partial mastery of the knowledge and skills considered to be fundamental for proficient work at each grade level). Clearly, we have much to do before we can feel satisfied that our educational system helps all students master the literacy skills and practices expected of adults in our society.

From public debates to legislative sessions in state and federal congresses, from school board meetings to news articles, and from parent-teacher meetings to conversations in the teachers' lounge, recommendations abound for the question: "How can we teach all children to read?" Experts from many quarters offer teachers a veritable bazaar of solutions—guided reading, early intervention, literature-based instruction, integrated language arts, phonics first... the list goes on and on. More than any other stakeholders in education, teachers know that no one answer, no single approach, no simple solution will lead all students to success as readers and writers. Yet they also recognize that eclectic, patchwork approaches will not provide youngsters' (and their teachers) with a coherent, shared experience of literacy as a cultural tool for thought and communication.

Effective literacy instruction is complex, and its conditions are variable. Practice must be planned yet adaptable, responsive to learners' diversity and changing needs, integrative across the curriculum, and accountable to many—sometimes competing—goals. Given this view of practice, teacher development (in the form of skills training and information updates), while useful, is insufficient. These approaches do not afford practitioners the opportunity to learn as flexible, inventive problem-solvers (Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, & Anderson, 1988). Teachers and teacher educators need to make sense of a dizzying array of problems and solutions. To do this they need principled conceptual frameworks that will guide their thought and action. Neither prescriptions nor road maps, these frameworks are more like invitations to thinking, schemata that help teachers plan, act, manage complexity, and make moment-to-moment decisions and assessments. Our paper describes one such framework designed by a practitioner inquiry network called the Teachers' Learning Collaborative (TLC). The framework, Book Club *Plus*, addresses the multiple, competing responsibilities of the classroom teacher.

Working Together to Design Book Club *Plus*

To learn to read well, all students need to read thought-provoking, age-appropriate books. They also need to respond thoughtfully to these books in discussion, writing, and as they read other texts. Insuring these opportunities was the aim of the original Book Club program designed by Raphael and her colleagues (see Raphael, Pardo, Highfield, & McMahon, 1997). That framework illustrated ways to organize curriculum and peer-led discussion and writing about text. Yet, important as this learning is, independent, self-regulated readers also must learn and practice a myriad of skills and strategies at the instructional level.

We know that there is wide variation in classrooms, with students reading below, at, or beyond grade level. We also know that struggling readers in particular need intensive instructional support. One dilemma facing teachers is how to engage their diverse readers in meaningful activities around age-appropriate text, while also providing instruction appropriate to each student's individual needs. Our goal in designing the Book Club *Plus* framework was to manage this dilemma (Lampert, 1985) so that all youngsters would learn to read with teacher support at their instructional level, and could practice comprehension skills and strategies in conversation and writing in response to age-appropriate literature.

Developing the Book Club *Plus* framework was a also an experiment in professional development (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, in press). Teachers and teacher educators in our state volunteered to design the framework.[1] For three years and across social, economic, geographic, and grade level borders, we worked together to design and field-test a user-friendly literacy curriculum framework meeting three criteria: (1) it guides rather than prescribes; (2) it addresses a common problem but is open to local adaptation; and (3) it reflects current theory and research on the teaching and learning of literacy. In the process, we learned about the nature and power

of teacher development that is—like good literacy—sustained, dialogic, and inter-textual. In what follows, three members of TLC describe the organizational framework for Book Club *Plus*—its conceptual background as well as its implementation in one 3rd grade classroom.

Conceptual Foundations of Book Club *Plus*

One of TLC's premises is that complex learning takes time and involves multiple kinds of interaction with text. A second is that skills and strategies are learned in communities of practice, where more experienced others (both teachers and peers) support and sustain one's individual development. Yet, as experienced practitioners know, creating these conditions for learning in classrooms is easier said than done. Classrooms are embedded in bureaucratic organizations. Their interactions are historically characterized in terms of "crowds, praise, and power" (Jackson, 1968). Large groups, limited time, a crowded curriculum, and the press for accountability all truncate experiences, harden subject matter boundaries, isolate students by ability, and in general combine to make meaningful literacy education for all students difficult to achieve.

Within these constraints, collaborative research offers some useful examples of teachers reframing their classroom practices to create new spaces for learning (Lampert, 1992; Short & Armstrong, 1993; Englert & Mariage, 1996). In literacy, Raphael and her colleagues' research on book clubs demonstrated that ambitious goals for comprehension instruction could be manageably achieved inside the classroom (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). Their Book Club Program (Raphael et al., 1997) offers an instructional framework stressing cooperative learning, access to age-appropriate literature for all students, talk about text, and integration of reading, writing, and oral language.

The Book Club program[2] grew out of two key understandings from educational theory. The first is that *language use is fundamental to thinking*—that what is learned by an individual begins in the social interactions in which he or she engages (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978, Wells, 1999). Thus, in Book Club it is important to provide multiple contexts in which students engage in the language practices that support their literacy work. In some teacher-led contexts, the teacher engages in explicit instruction, modeling, and scaffolding. In others, the teachers' role is as facilitator or participant (Au & Raphael, 1998). Some contexts involve students working in student-led groups, from dyads and project teams to book club discussion groups. Some require students to work independently. By means of students' interactions with their teachers, their thinking again "goes public," and they have the opportunity to hear the language of literacy and learning. In these interactions learners use language to achieve collective and personal goals.

The second understanding is the need to *increase the role of literature in reading instruction*. Used here, the term "literature" includes written text genres of literary quality as well as well as expository genres such as textbooks and brochures and transactional ones such as Internet documents.

Scholars advocate using authentic text to teach a broad repertoire of reading abilities (Galda, 1998; Short, 1998). With this recommendation comes the proviso that we avoid "basalizing" texts, honoring their forms and functions rather than simply treating them as vehicles for instruction. A literature-based curriculum must take seriously instruction in the skills and strategies associated with literacy learning, as well as instruction in literary elements and opportunity for response to the literature being read.

Using literature certainly invites instruction in literary response and literary elements. Perhaps less obvious, using literature also provides a vehicle for exploring our culture and society, for literature is the accumulated understandings of humanity. The content of literature directly relates to a third understanding less central to the original Book Club Program, but foundational to the design of Book Club *Plus*: namely, that *school-based literacy education should prepare students to live and work in a diverse, democratic society* (Hiebert, 1991). Studies of culture and its social, historical, personal, and political dimensions tend to be slighted in the texts and contexts of both teacher education and classroom learning (Florio-Ruane with deTar, in press). Literature study in the company of others potentially offers both a mirror reflecting our own lives and a window on other people, places, times, and cultures that readers might never have the chance to experience directly (Galda, 1998). As such, literature can become a powerful tool for critical thinking, helping both students and teachers to understand their own perspectives as cultural and therefore limited phenomena, relative, and in many ways different from experiences of people in other times, places, and groups (Dasenbrock, 1992).

Some of the members of TLC had opportunities to experience this kind of learning about culture and identity for themselves, as participants in graduate courses and autobiography book clubs sponsored by Raphael and Florio-Ruane (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, Kehus, George, Hasty, & Highfield, 2000). As the next section of this paper illustrates, these experiences are reflected in a fourth fundamental understanding of Book Club *Plus*—that *narrative plays a central role in understanding and in sharing our understandings with others*. Adapting the Book Club program to teachers' learning, for example, Florio-Ruane found that responses to text in book club discussions often took narrative form. Rather than evidencing a lack of rigorous reading or deep comprehension of text, this narrative response to text can be seen as a powerful form of reading, in which difficult ideas like culture are explored by way of the literary imagination (Florio-Ruane with deTar, in press). Thus, as Bruner (1999) suggests, narrative (which characterizes so much of written literature) "expresses the very form of thinking that human beings use for representing human happenings in the intersubjective world characteristic of human cultural adaptation... Narrative is the shape of being human, fragile though it may be" (1999, p. 4). By studying narrative—both as an end in its own right and as a vehicle for becoming literate—we increase our understanding of cultural histories and how they individually connect to the cultural histories of others in our diverse society and world.

A Look At Book Club *Plus*

Based on these four understandings from research and theory, we wanted Book Club *Plus* to promote all students' learning, and to incorporate the skills and strategies associated with reading acquisition and the critical thinking required for living in and contributing to a democratic society. Its structure and thematic content were designed to build from an understanding of self to understanding of others, and to promote engagement through compelling and personally meaningful texts and activities. As the examples below illustrate, both organizational structure and thematic content help weave a meaningful fabric out of diverse activities, texts, and youngsters. The framework helps teachers make literacy learning more coherent for an individual student across different instructional contexts and activities and for all students, across different instructional levels in a class.

Reflecting the diversity of the TLC network, the framework was designed to be used and adapted in a variety of classroom settings. Variables included grade level (participants in our teacher network piloted the framework in grades from 1st through 8th); school community (participants teach in affluent and middle-income suburbs, lower-income rural areas, and high-poverty city neighborhoods); and students' ethnic, linguistic, social, and religious background (Raphael, et al, 2000). We explored the framework's use within different district and school-wide conditions. In some cases, a textbook series for reading/language arts was mandated. In others, teachers had more choice. Some schools had ample materials, books, and supplies. Others did not. Some classes had more than thirty students, while others had fewer than twenty. While ways and means differed from place to place, in all cases teachers needed to take into account state and local standards for literacy learning and—given the nature of our theme—social studies learning as well. TLC took these local and shared constraints as opportunities to identify the framework's essential features and assess its usefulness to diverse teachers and students. Below we describe features of the framework that applied across settings and illustrate their local adaptation with examples from Marianne George's 3rd grade classroom.

Organizing the Year

Teachers organized Book Club *Plus* instruction within three literacy units, each of which could last from three to eight weeks. The overarching, yearlong theme, "Our Storied Lives," built from Unit 1 ("Stories of Self") to Unit 2 ("Family Stories") to Unit 3 ("Stories of Culture").

Stories of Self. In Unit 1, "Stories of Self," students begin by studying autobiography, the varying ways in which authors have presented and "re-presented" their lives, and the ways in which artifacts are used to prompt reflection and illustrate or represent life events. This study takes place through individual and shared reading, as well as teacher read-alouds. In Marianne's classroom individual students read autobiographies such as *Tarantula in my purse* (J. C. George, 1996) and biographical stories such as Curtis' (1998) *Tell me again about the night I was born*. Books heard during the unit included autobiographies such as Dahl's (1984) *Boy: Tales of a*

childhood, dePaolo's (2000) *26 Fairmont Avenue*, and Paulsen's (1999) *My life in dog years*. Shared readings took place using books such as Joyce's (1997) *The world of William Joyce scrapbook*. In addition, students take part in a variety of writing activities responsive to the theme and literature. MariAnne's students, for example, made timelines of their lives, identifying critical events for each year. Each student also wrote a personal narrative about a critical event in his or her life and a "snapshot" autobiography of their current life (based on their current school photo). In social studies, students studied their roles and those of their families within their communities.

Family Stories. Autobiography provides a conceptual base for Unit 2, "Family Stories." The idea that an individual's identity is embedded in family narrative was the starting point in MariAnne's classroom for an author study. Patricia Polacco is a prolific author with roots in Michigan. Her books are anthologized in reading series, are widely available as inexpensive trade books, and are written at a range of reading levels. Polacco's stories are based in her family's experiences and history. She provides many facts about her family in the illustrations and text, book jackets, and dedications. Her art and writing are also featured in a video interview appropriate for elementary students, in which she describes the process of creating her books. As they studied Polacco's literature, MariAnne's class created their own texts. For example, students interviewed a family member from or about their grandparents' generation. From this interview they learned a family story to share with peers. Each student also made an oral presentation based on an artifact from or about the person interviewed.

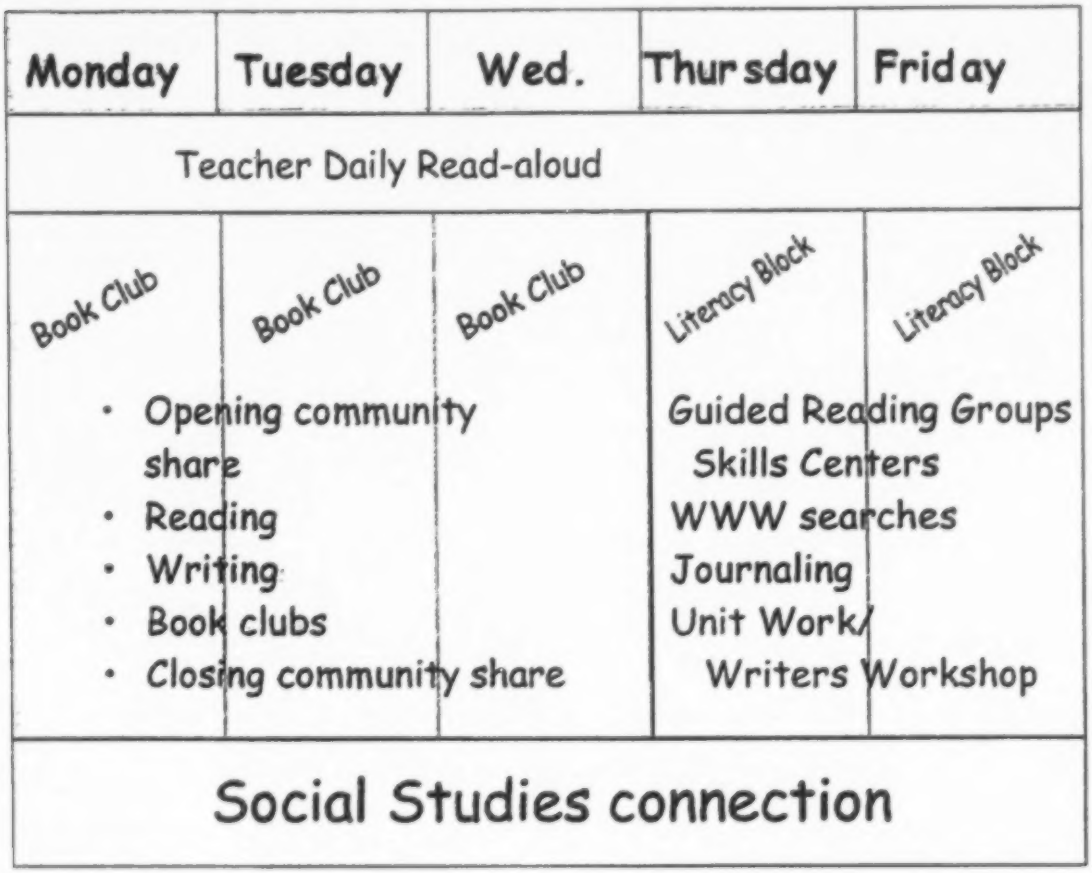
Stories of Culture. Family stories are embedded within the narrative of our cultural heritage, so the segue to Unit 3, "Stories of Culture," is also quite natural. Within this unit, students read and hear literature of immigrant experience. In MariAnne's class, for example, students read and discussed *Molly's Pilgrim* (Cohen, 1983) in their book clubs; *From Miss Ida's porch* (Belton, 1993) during shared reading; and *Grandmother's latkes* (Drucker, 1992), *Masai and I* (Kroll, 1992), *Pueblo Storyteller*, (Hoyt-Goldsmith, 1991), and *A birthday basket for Tia* (Mora, 1992) during guided reading. They also heard books such as Bierman's (1998) Journey to *Ellis Island: How my grandfather came to America* during teacher read-alouds. These books helped students compare and contrast their own family stories to those they had read and heard. Writing activities similarly extended their family stories into cultural narratives as students continued to interview family members about their ethnic, linguistic, and social heritage. These interviews culminated in children creating quilt squares representing their heritage and writing essays about their own family's journey to America.

Organizing the Week and Day

During the three units, students participate in two conceptually-linked contexts for learning: Book Club and Literacy Block. In Book Club *Plus*, the two contexts occur in two- or three-day cycles within a given week. As Figure One illustrates, these thematically-linked contexts provide opportunities for teaching the full range of language and literacy skills students need in order

to become literacy users, critical thinkers, and citizens in a democratic society. Each context is described briefly below.

Figure 1. Getting organized for the week and the day



Book Club. Within Book Club, four components—community share, reading, writing, and book club—interweave to support students' learning to read, respond to, and discuss literature in student-led discussion groups. As Figure One shows, Book Club is typically comprised of four episodes, with the length of time for each being flexible and dependent upon student needs and teacher goals. In general, however, the framework provides for an extended period of engagement with literature as follows: opening community share (5-15 minutes); reading (10-20 minutes); writing in response logs (10-15 minutes), student book clubs (3-20 minutes), and closing community share (5-20 minutes).

Opening "community share" is a teacher-led, whole-group activity introducing students to elements of literature discussion, and previewing specific skills, strategies, and knowledge that will be useful as students read, write, and talk about their book club's book. When used to close the Book Club session, community share brings small groups back together to share ideas and issues that emerged in their book clubs' discussions. The "reading" com-

ponent involves students' gaining access to the book to be discussed. Their reading can be independent, but it can also be supported by adults, buddies, audiotapes, or other resources. What is most important is that all class members, regardless of reading level, have access to the literature to be discussed in the book club, and that each student participates in written response to that book and discussion of it in a mixed-ability small group.[3] The "writing" component involves daily response in students' reading logs to help prepare for upcoming discussions, and sustained writing that occurs when process writing activities are connected thematically (e.g., by similar genre, theme, content, author craft) to the books that students are reading and discussing in their clubs.

"Book Club" is the student-led discussion group for which the program was named. The class is divided into small groups of four to five students, heterogeneously grouped for reading level, gender, classroom status, verbal ability, and so forth. Students remain in these groups, or "book clubs," throughout a unit. On some occasions, all book clubs read and discuss the same book. On others, the clubs read different books encircling the shared theme. In all cases, the books are theme- and age-appropriate and sufficiently complex to warrant and support in-depth discussion and a range of response types. Within book clubs, students discuss ideas that emerged from their reading and log responses, airing their questions, confusions, and related personal experiences. Students are also taught norms for appropriate behavior in book club discussion, such as listening with respect, building on others' ideas, debating and critiquing ideas, assuming leadership, and following another's lead. Thus the process of learning to read, write, and talk in book club embodies democratic processes and learning within a community.

Literacy Block. As Figure One illustrates, Literacy Block is the second key part of the Book Club *Plus* framework. The focus here is instruction and the practice of skills and strategies. This practice occurs during guided reading in small ability groups (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) and during independent work designed for practicing skills and honing strategies as students tackle extended writing and inquiry activities related to the Book Club unit theme. In guided reading, students are placed at one of three levels—at, above, or below grade—and read thematically linked literature at their instructional level with extensive instructional support. These groupings are flexible, so that students can move among them as they grow and learn.

When they are not working with the teacher, students work independently or in the ability groups to practice subskills of reading and writing (e.g., spelling practice, grammar practice, handwriting) and work on theme-related writing assignments. Some classrooms organize these different activities using "centers." Students move from center to center over the course of Literacy Block, when they are not with the teacher (Au, Carroll, & Scheu, 1997). Some classrooms have an area for guided reading; other students remain at their seats, going to areas of the room to pick up needed materials, but working at their desks. Some classrooms use a combination of approaches. In short, the framework provides structure within which improvisation can occur. In the remainder of this paper we illustrate this point by taking a closer look at the Book Club *Plus* framework as it was used by MariAnne to organize literacy instruction during the "Family Stories" unit. We close with thumbnail sketches of three of her students learning within Book Club *Plus*.

Book Club *Plus* in One Third Grade Classroom

MariAnne organized the week to include a daily read-aloud, three Book Club days, and two Literacy Block days. She used the writers workshop for students to focus on writing a family story. Defined as "unit work," students developed their family story over the course of the unit. This involved preparing for and interviewing a family member from their grandparents' generation (or, if not available, interviewing one who had stories from that generation); identifying from the interview a family story to share in class; writing notes, then developing an oral presentation of the story; rehearsing, then presenting the family story to their peers. The home connection thus involved parents in sharing family stories, facilitating connections to family members, and helping to identify or—if needed—create the artifact around which the story was based. In addition to the language arts contexts, MariAnne used the social studies curriculum time to further develop the connections among history, family, and their community.

The Book Club phase of the week centered on *Chicken Sunday*. Mini-lessons during opening community share over the three-day period included dialogue use as a beginning focus on authors' craft, vocabulary concepts related to family and sensory words, and how to search the World Wide Web for information on authors and illustrators (using Patricia Polacco's website for the example). On Book Club days, students read independently or in one of the support contexts, wrote individual reading log entries, and met to discuss the book. During the book clubs, MariAnne observed one group at a time, keeping notes on students' individual and group progress. She audiotaped groups that she could not directly observe, in order to assess them later, frequently in the car on her way home. MariAnne ended the Book Club events each day with closing community share. She followed a pattern of first asking students to share substantive ideas that had come out during their book clubs. Students discussed Polacco's craft (e.g., the way the author used illustrations to tell part of her story, the way she built suspense in her stories) as well as the content of her stories (e.g., the stories she told from the two sides of her family—Russian immigrants and Michigan farmers). Following discussion of the books, MariAnne always asked students what they thought went well in their book clubs and what had been hard for them that day. In this way, attention was devoted to the oral response and group process, focusing first on strengths (e.g., we asked good questions, had a good "seed idea" that led to a long discussion), and then on problems to be solved (e.g., no one listened to me today, we interrupted each other too much).

On both Book Club and Literacy Block days, MariAnne read aloud from Polacco books that she thought the students would enjoy, but wouldn't have the opportunity to read on their own. In addition, on Literacy Block days she spent approximately 15 minutes with each of the three guided reading groups, using a Polacco book written at, above, or below third grade level, depending on the level of the readers in the group. She focused on areas of reading instruction from her district's reading/language arts curriculum guide and from the Scholastic scope and sequence chart, which was the district-adopted commercial reading program. While MariAnne met with the guided reading groups, students worked at their desks on a variety of tasks: (a) handwriting practice sheet, (b) spelling, (c) journal entries, (d) dictio-

nary skill—using guide words, (e) writers' workshop and family story preparation, and (f) Internet searches related to authors and illustrators

Over five days and under the umbrella of the Family Stories, all students engaged in meaningful work with age-appropriate literature and had opportunities to learn and practice skills with text at their instructional level. Visiting the classroom, an observer would be hard-pressed to find the rich getting richer and poor getting poorer. Each student met twice in a guided reading group, engaged with peers in three book clubs, participated in whole-class instruction at least three times, read independently daily, engaged in whole-class book discussion daily, engaged in a variety of writing daily, and practiced skills daily—some related directly to reading and discussing books; others to reading, writing, spelling, and grammar subskills. And every student used literate practices to learn and communicate about the theme of family.

In Conclusion: Learning in Book Club *Plus*

To illustrate how Book Club *Plus* supported diverse students' learning, we close with thumbnail sketches of our assessments of three students in MariAnne's class: Rikki, Ted, and Nami. Rikki and Ted represent two kinds of struggling readers, both poorly served by a diet of drill and practice or by a laissez-faire approach that slights instruction. Rikki is reading below grade level. The teacher's challenge is to find ways to design a learning experience for Rikki which is rich in both skill instruction and opportunities to use literacy in meaningful practice. Ted, on the other hand, while able to read grade-level materials, is disengaged. He has not enjoyed reading during his first few years in school. Re-engaging him in written language is an essential problem to be solved if he is to progress at his grade level. Nami is a very high achieving student who is exceeding grade level goals and is functionally bilingual in English and Japanese. She challenges the teacher to support and extend her literacy development within the context of a multi-ability classroom and a grade-level curriculum

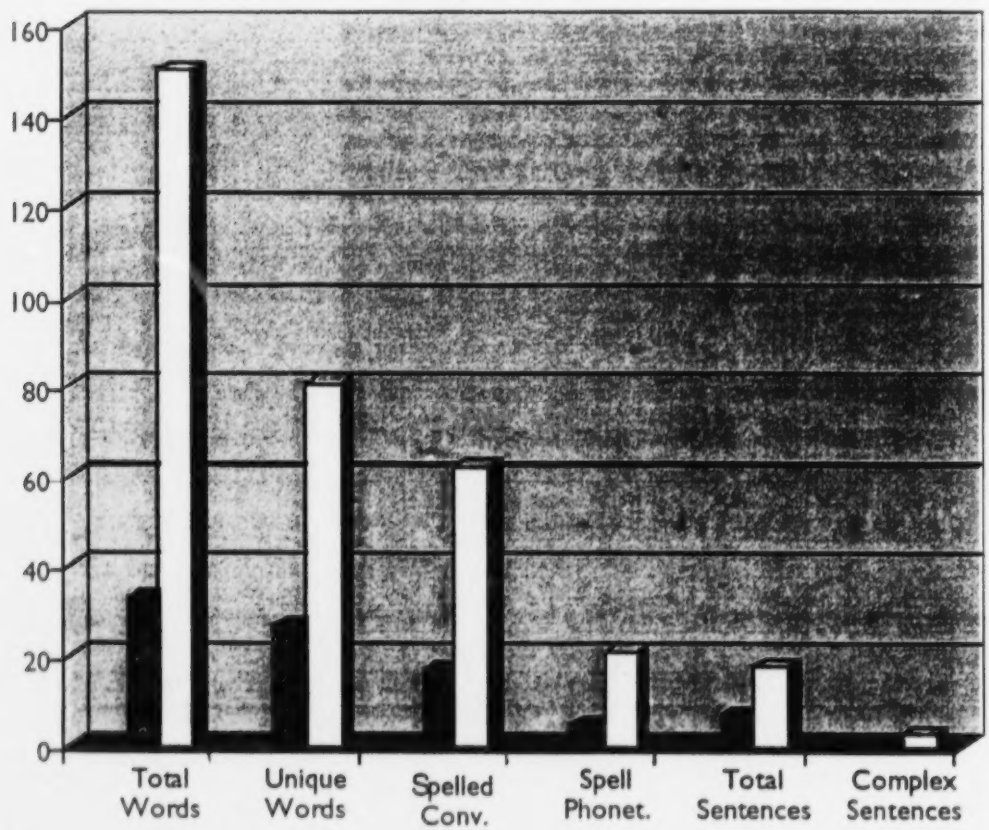
Rikki: A Struggling Reader Succeeds

Rikki, the youngest student in MariAnne's third grade class, entered third grade reading on a beginning 2/2 level (using the Scholastic Placement Test, which accompanies the district-adopted basal reading program). Labeled as a "transitional reader," she had worked with the school's learning consultant since first grade. She received summer tutoring between both first and second, and second and third grades. By the end of third grade, Rikki scored 80% on the Expanding Level Scholastic test (70% is passing), thus leaving third grade reading on grade level. Her writing showed similar growth,

though—as writing samples will reveal—she still struggles with language conventions such as spelling and punctuation.

To see what she was learning in Book Club *Plus*, we analyzed several samples of Rikki's writing. The first of these was written in response to the prompt, "Tell Me About Yourself." We looked at Rikki's written responses to this prompt at the beginning and again at the end of the academic year. We selected these samples because the prompt invited students to draw upon their knowledge of autobiography, personal and family stories, and cultural heritage and thus was sensitive to their learning within the Book Club *Plus* framework. Rikki's pretest was typical—a relatively short list of facts, with little voice underlying the information conveyed. Her posttest has a stronger sense of voice, and shows growth on a number of conventional measures. Two figures illustrate the growth we saw. The bar graph in Figure 2 shows the increase from her first to her second written response in (1) total words; (2) number of unique (i.e., each word used is counted only once) words; (3) the number of words spelled conventionally; (4) the number of temporary spellings using conventional phoneme-grapheme correspondence; (5) total number of sentences; and (6) sentences reflecting some complexity.

Figure 2. Writing Sample Analysis: Pretest—Posttest Writing Prompt



Rikki's written texts, both unedited drafts, are displayed in Figure 3. They give us insight into Rikki's learning of thematic content based on her reading, writing about, and discussion of text.

Figure 3. Pretest—posttest writing prompts

PRETEST: AUGUST, 1998	POSTTEST: JUNE, 1999
My Life I come HoME FROM Scholl I eat a snak I woch TV. I rid my bike to Badins or Laras. My eeys Are Boune My hair is dndy- Boand. I was Born on Agest 1	About Me When I was born, I had now hare. But my mom said I was cute. My sister said that I shouuld be named Sinderella. I was born Auget 1, 1990 3:35 am. I was born Mary hospetel. When I went to the chich to get Blessed, on ant Viky was holding me and I was chuwing on ant Viky's themb. Then I went to Dokters. they gave me a book. they made it for me. My hole family was in it. And I had it ever sinc I was boin. Then I [undecipher- able] 8. Know im ahmost 9. Well that all you kn- ow about me so bye Good bye! Why ain t you living? Oh, so you want to here more! Well you tauke avery thing from me. Oh ya I forgot my sister, Jessie, she dropt the cake on the floor for Alexe s birth- day. The end.

On her pretest, given before the students experienced Book Club *Plus*, Rikki's repertoire for talking about herself is limited. Like others in her class she conveys a typical school day, adds a brief description of her brown eyes and dirty blond hair, and tells her date of birth. (Other information typically appearing on pretests included the number and gender of siblings, ages of parents, lists of extended family members, addresses and phone numbers, and so forth). The "basketful of facts" structure of Rikki's pretest gives way in the spring posttest to a more detailed personal narrative that describes events (e.g., her birth, her baptism) and key family members. While neither sample represents a polished piece of writing, the posttest shows clear growth in its content and structure.

A second set of writing samples is reproduced in Figure 4. They come from Rikki's sustained writing during Literacy Block's writing workshops.

Changes in content, structure, and conventions can again be seen over the school year and are linked to Book Club *Plus* activities and themes.

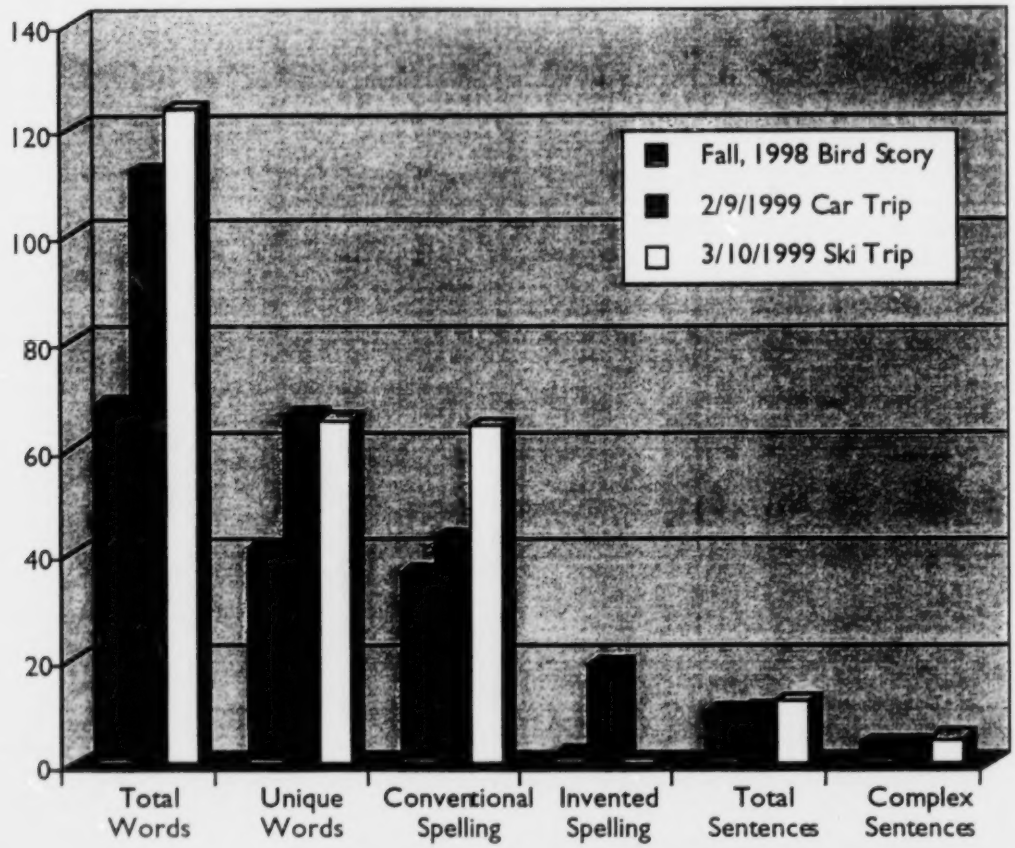
Figure 4. Rikki's sustained writing samples

FALL, 1998 MY BIRD [FINAL VERSION]	2/9/99 UNTITLED [ROUGH DRAFT]	MARCH 10TH ROUGH DRAFT: MY SKI TRIP [ROUGH DRAFT]
My bird is friendly. He does not have a crown. His name is Alber. He likes to play with the next door neihbor's bird. He is vary neat.he is good at work, and heis a roben. He is king of all the robens in the city. But he is not the king of all the robens in the world. But he inangs it. & I love him.	When I was going to go to WhaltDisnyWold My sister and brother cept on tesing and poleing my hair out. I cept saying stop it but they gust said oh you're a litel BaBy criying. Well my Brother cept on saying That. My sister cept poleing my hair. For an Hour and a 15 min. Soon my sister Stoped poleing my hair. But My Brother cept onying me. He said I bet you cant count to 100! My parints whar to striket about all the nows. The wher getting oniyd to! Finily my sister said ly of Ricki. By the time we got Thar allmost all my hair was gon. The End	The Ski Trip I was so excited to go there. When I got thar, I ran to get ready My mom said I have to go with her. My sister whent on the big hill a couple of times. the man who was controlling the machine cept on stiking his tongue at my sister. When I whent on there with my sister, she asked me if I could stick my tongue at him. Yes. I said. The man was stiking his tongue at me again, so I stuk min. While I was busy stiking my tongue at him I missit the stop to go of The man stoped the machine I was five feet in the air, so I jumped down. I kept sking. The end.

The fall sample is about one of Rikki's pets. MariAnne had read Paulsen's (1999) *My life in dog years*, conveying the author's autobiography through a description of his relationship to his dogs. At this time some students in the class were independently reading George's (1996) book, *There's a tarantula in my purse and 172 other wild pets*, in which the author uses the same convention of telling her life story through her pets. Both books were very much a part of whole-class discussions in community share, and thus may have influenced Rikki's writing about a pet bird. The sample written in February describes a car trip taken by Rikki's family, during which she is terrorized by her older siblings, especially her brother. Again we can see Rikki learning to use a trope found in her study of literature. This time her theme and text structure are influenced by her reading Polacco's *My rotten redheaded older brother* in her guided reading group. A bit later, in March, Rikki writes of a family ski trip, but this time she is very much a part of her sibling's fun and games. Here she seems ready to step outside the literary models and develop her own family story theme. In addition, as the bar graph in Figure 5 indicates, her story length and use of conventions steadily increases. Especially noticeable are increases in the length of the text and the number of complex sentences. In the latter two drafts (February and

March) Rikki's use of invented spelling decreases and her conventional spelling improves.[4]

Figure 5. Sustained writing sample analysis



These analyses of Rikki's writing samples were done by the authors, and we were curious to see what readers familiar with neither Rikki nor Book Club *Plus* would make of them. We therefore asked a panel of three teachers from Rikki's school district to analyze the five writings in terms of their district's standards and benchmarks. The teachers did not know that the pieces had been written by the same student, nor did they know when during the school year they were written. They were asked to apply standards for successful end-of-third-grade writing as they did three evaluations for each piece: (a) a holistic score, (b) a ranking of the five writings, and (c) a score based on the districts' writing rubrics. Their assessments were consistent with our earlier analysis, finding progress in Rikki's content knowledge and use of conventions. In addition, however, when the teachers viewed the writing in the context of district rubrics, they identified growth in Rikki's knowledge and use of authorial craft, including elements such as voice, theme, character development, and elements of narrative structure.

A third set of writing samples, Rikki's Book Club response log entries, reveals changes in response to literature during the year. From single questions or comments in each entry, sometimes accompanied by a picture, Rikki moves to more informally-worded but conceptually more complex responses to the texts. In assessing these samples, we are concerned not with surface feature correctness, but with the complexity of response to literature. Rikki's entry on 11/23/98 illustrates the nature of her early efforts to "talk (in this case write) about text." In response to Chicken Coop Monster, a short story by Patricia McKissack (1992), Rikki described her fear of spirits (original spelling, spacing, and punctuation is preserved):

> When I was litel I
>
> Owes was afad of
>
> Sperts. But Im still afrad
>
> Of sperts. I covered My
>
> Self at night.

She describes a connection she has made from the text to her own life—her own fear of spirits both when she was little and presently, and how she covered herself up, possibly to protect herself or to hide.

In contrast, her entry from 5/18/99, in response to Stone Fox (Gardiner & Sewall, 1980), reflects several different responses: a question about the story, acknowledging confusion; reasons for liking the book despite some confusion; and further questions to take up with her peers during Book Club.

> I have a queshten on the end of chapter 3.
>
> Was litel Willy in the race or was he pracising? Thats the reason I was getting comefused.
>
> I like the book alot so far. I wonder what's going to happen next. This book is so exicting so far. it's like you are in the book. I'm getting comfused thogh.
>
> Was litel Willy's granfather alive or dead? Because litel Willy is talking to his granfather.
>
> Dous he have any parints arond?
>
> dous litel Willy have any frenids?
>
> Well I don't know!

Rikki's log notes indicate an increased level of engagement with the text itself and an internalization of the give-and-take about meaning that occurs orally in Book Clubs. Her questions (lines 2, 7, 9, and 10) are relevant to both character development and plot. She is expressive about her own thinking as she tries to understand what is causing her confusion. She details why she likes the book (lines 4–6) in terms of its excitement and suspense. Her sustained thinking about the text is evidenced by the somewhat longer and more varied written response. In sum, the evidence from Rikki's work

suggests that she is learning from age-appropriate and instructional-level texts, from exploration of important literary themes, and from the chance to think, speak, read, and write about text. With success as a reader and writer, she appears more engaged, willing to engage and stay with challenging texts such as Stone Fox.

Patrick: An Unenthusiastic Reader becomes Re-Engaged

Patrick entered third grade reading on grade level, though according to his mother's report at fall conferences he showed little interest in reading in or out of school. While very inquisitive, Patrick was easily distracted during the fall. He showed difficulty focusing on reading and written work, whether working independently, in small groups, or in whole-class activities. By the end of the year, however, the picture of Patrick's learning and engagement had changed. In MariAnne's end-of-year reflections, she noted:

> I saw a dramatic change in Patrick throughout the year. He loved the autobiography literature and the group discussions. I saw him become engaged in reading both during structured reading time and independent reading time. He really blossomed in March with the culture focus—this brought in his deep interest in science and history.

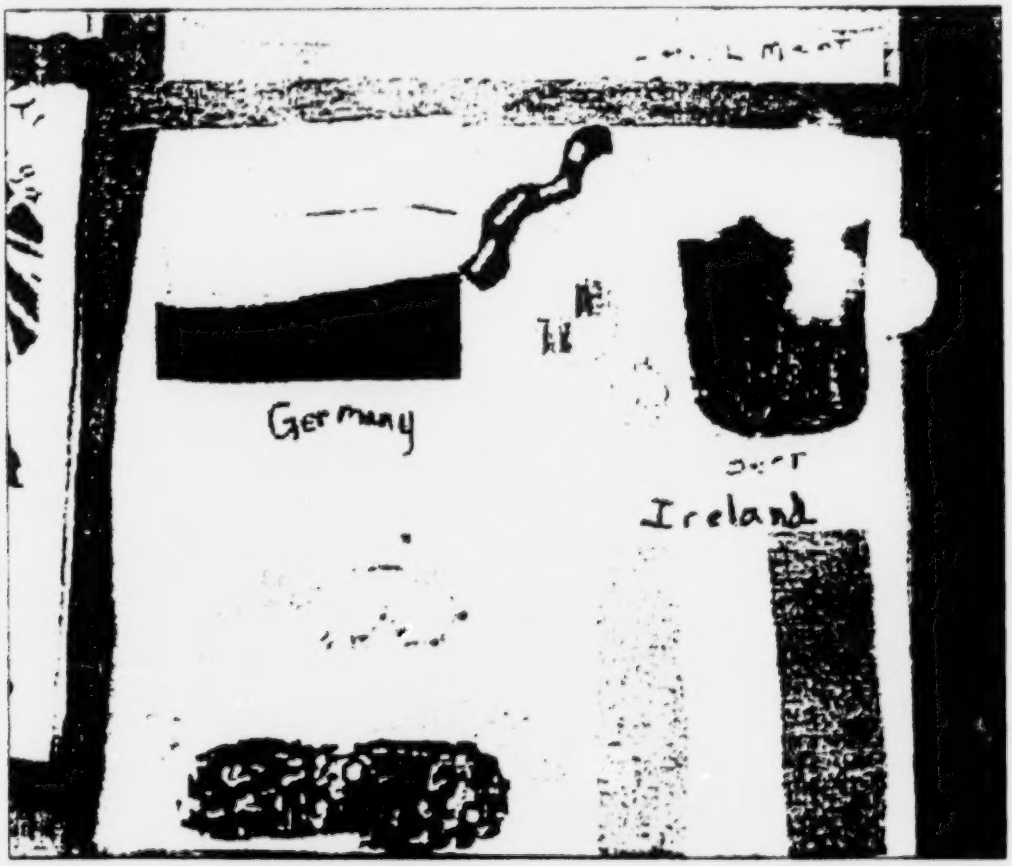
For Patrick, success came through his engagement with school literacy activities related to autobiography and culture, themes he found compelling. He enjoyed reading and talking about autobiographical literature. Moreover, he gradually assumed leadership in Book Club discussions and group unit projects. For an end-of-unit group presentation, for example, Patrick orchestrated the creation of a puppet show and gave a talk about Gary Paulsen's life "in dog years." Patrick eagerly wrote stories about his own life and grew increasingly interested in his ancestry and in cross-cultural connections within families and among people. For example, as one of the culminating activities of the year, students were asked to create a quilt square that conveyed their cultural backgrounds. Patrick's square, shown in Figure 6, captures his mixed ancestry—German (the autobahn, beer, and the peace symbol reflecting the Berlin wall's demise) and Irish (sheep, mountains, and the potato famine that led his ancestors to immigrate to the United States).

When a visitor entered the classroom, Patrick proudly announced that the students represented over 27 different cultures and that their classroom community showed how cultures connect and change. On another occasion, his interest in others' cultural backgrounds contributed to his writing a story of a bullfighter. During writers' workshop, Patrick asked one of his Spanish-speaking classmates for assistance. He wanted his characters' names and important parts of their dialogue to be written in Spanish and thus authentic to the language they would actually speak.

Patrick's end-of-year Scholastic Expanding Level reading test score was 93%. However, Patrick's success as measured by this score conveys only part of the picture. More important is his growing interest in and excitement about literacy and culture. In his writing, his oral presentations, and his choice of reading, Patrick demonstrated the power of the unit themes for re-engaging

not only readers who struggle with skills, but those who may have turned away from the joy that literature and literacy can bring. He left third grade telling his teacher he was going to become an anthropologist and study cultures. He told his young neighbor, Adam, that he was fortunate to be able to be in Book Club *Plus* the following fall.

Figure 6. Patrick's quilt square



Nami: A Successful Reader Moves Beyond Classroom Literacy Practice

A good reading program for diverse learners addresses all students' needs. Rikki illustrates the power of such a program for struggling readers and Patrick reflects its success for students who are able to read and write, but are not particularly interested. But, what of the already successful and engaged reader? Nami, our last example, suggests that when students see literacy as a powerful tool, they seek to use their literacy abilities beyond the confines of the classroom and curriculum. Nami was a high-achieving girl who had moved to the United States from Japan with her family at the age of three and a half. Successful in her language and literacy learning, she was in the top reading group and ended the year scoring 96% on the Scholastic

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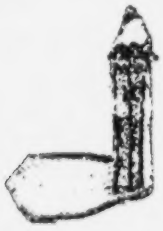
Expanding Level test. In addition to her academic work in public school, she also attended Japanese school on Saturday and was becoming literate in both languages. Nami could easily have been bored in a conventional literacy program. Yet after reading many published autobiographies, Nami began to consider publishing her own story. She crafted a fictional account of the life of a short pencil, perhaps a metaphor for the importance of not being swayed by superficial physical traits. Using the Japanese she had been learning in her Saturday classes, she translated her story (see Figure 7) and submitted it to the Japanese-American newspaper in her community, where it was published on April 16, 1999.

Figure 7. Beyond the classroom walls

I AM COOL TOO

by

I am a short pencil. Everybody calls me short hand and teases me. Grandpa said," A short pencil can be loved more than a long pencil. " But if I think hard, I'm just laying in a corner of a desk without anyone using me. When I was long or I handsome. I was in a backpack and people took me to school. But now nobody uses me. Why does everyone always use long and good pencils? I don't mind if I get very short so, I want to be used more. " I am cool too", even if I am short.



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A framework is only as good as the learning it affords. In Book Club *Plus*, our goals for students' learning included growth in literacy knowledge and skills that could be demonstrated on traditional tests, as well as on informal assessments (e.g., reading logs, process writing samples). We were committed to promoting students' engagement and ownership of literacy processes. And, because of the nature of the unit content, we encouraged students to develop their "voice" and "identity," as shown through their family stories. While we were particularly interested in how this framework facilitated literacy learning among struggling readers, we also felt that an effective curriculum should sustain the interest and promote the learning of students across all ability levels. We believe that our network's development of the Book Club *Plus* framework gives us a new tool for addressing the pressing question: "How can we teach all children to read?"

Notes

1. Members of the Teachers' Learning Collaborative whose efforts are reflected in this paper include (in alphabetical order) Dara Bacher, Jennifer Berne, Karen Eisele, Susan Florio-Ruane, MariAnne George, Kristin Grattan, Nina Hasty, Amy Heitman, Kathy Highfield, Jacquelyn Jones-Frederick, Marcella Kehus, Taffy Raphael, Molly Reed, Earlene Richardson, Jennifer Schlacta, Andy Topper, Jo Trumble, LaToya Wilson.

2. We use the convention of capitalizing Book Club when we refer to the overall program. We use lower case book club to refer to the small, student-led literature discussion groups for which the program was named.

3. Prior to third grade, Book Club activities are centered on the teacher read-aloud, since most books that these children could read independently would not have enough substance to warrant extended discussion. In the Book Club *Plus* framework, all children have access to a variety of other thematically-linked books, including some at their instructional level. The more books that students read related to the Book Club theme, the greater their opportunities to make intertextual connections, and connections between their reading and their own lives.

4. The lower invented spelling on the earliest piece is due to its status as a final draft that had been corrected.

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About CIERA

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) is the national center for research on early reading and represents a consortium of educators in five universities (University of Michigan, University of Virginia, and Michigan State University with University of Southern California and University of Minnesota), teacher educators, teachers, publishers of texts, tests, and technology, professional organizations, and schools and school districts across the United States. CIERA is supported under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, PR/Award Number R305R70004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

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CIERA Research Model

The model that underlies CIERA's efforts acknowledges many influences on children's reading acquisition. The multiple influences on children's early reading acquisition can be represented in three successive layers, each yielding an area of inquiry of the CIERA scope of work. These three areas of inquiry each present a set of persistent problems in the learning and teaching of beginning reading:

CIERA INQUIRY 1
Readers and Texts

Characteristics of readers and texts and their relationship to early reading achievement. What are the characteristics of readers and texts that have the greatest influence on early success in reading? How can children's existing knowledge and classroom environments enhance the factors that make for success?

CIERA INQUIRY 2
Home and School

Home and school effects on early reading achievment. How do the contexts of homes, communities, classrooms, and schools support high levels of reading achievement among primary-level children? How can these contexts be enhanced to ensure high levels of reading achievement for all children?

CIERA INQUIRY 3
Policy and Profession

Policy and professional effects on early reading achievement. How can new teachers be initiated into the profession and experienced teachers be provided with the knowledge and dispositions to teach young children to read well? How do policies at all levels support or detract from providing all children with access to high levels of reading instruction?

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